

## **Assessments; Estimates; Goals and Priorities; Strategies; and Progress Reports - Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified and Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds of Innovation and Expansion Activities**

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### **State Unified Plan**

The "Corrective Action" section of the State Unified Plan requires partner agencies to describe corrective action that will be taken if performance falls short of expectations. The Rehabilitation Act provides remedies and plans for state agencies that do not achieve required performance standards. State Plan Attachment 4.11(e)(2) addresses Unified Plan requirements in their entirety. This attachment clearly demonstrates:

- 1) The public vocational rehabilitation program's descriptions as to achievement of all goals and strategies described in the FFY 2000 to FFY 2007 State Plan attachments 4.12 (c)(1) and 4.12 (d).
- 2) All goals are being achieved and there is no need to describe inhibitive factors.
- 3) The Division of Rehabilitation Services in South Dakota exceeds all standards and indicators pursuant to performance standards in the Rehabilitation Act.
- 4) As evidenced in the Attachment 4.2c and in the SRC report to the Governor, there is an evaluation of progress made in improving the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program from the prior year.

Performance outcomes of the vocational rehabilitation program are summarized for and addressed to the Workforce Development Council as well as the state rehabilitation councils.

### **Progress in Accomplishing Strategies and Goals**

This section of the State Plan is a summary of the progress in accomplishing the Strategies and Goals as identified in FFY 2000 to FFY 2007 State Plan Attachments 4.12(c)(1) and 4.12(d).

#### **Goal 1: Improve earnings, benefits and career advancement for consumers served by DRS.**

The average annual wages for individuals rehabilitated in competitive employment during FFY 2006 was \$12,773. This is decrease from recent years, due to the increased number of Supported Employment cases and individuals served with Most Significant Disabilities. Of the successful closures during FFY 2006, only 32 individuals had medical insurance from the employer at the time of application. At closure, 175 individuals had medical insurance from their employer. This is an increase of 547%. Strategies that contributed to this accomplishment consist of:

- ✓ Continued promotion of employer involvement and recognition through the Business Leadership Network and other events through out the state during the National Disabilities Employment Awareness Month.
- ✓ Division's continuing emphasis on promoting higher wages for our consumers.
- ✓ Providing financial incentives to providers who help consumers receive higher wages.
- ✓ Development of a permanent process for certifying and evaluating private providers.
- ✓ District Offices are working more closely with local economic development to learn about potential career areas in their community.
- ✓ The utilization of community rehabilitation programs and private providers has expanded into additional rural communities in the state. The expansion has been more the result of current providers willing to travel to rural areas. Our current fee schedule does allow reimbursement for these travel expenses.

- ✓ During FFY 2000, the Division provided a comprehensive training session to the VR Counselors in providing self-employment as an option for consumers. This training included presentations and future coordination of utilizing the Small Business Administration. Additional strategies included development of a self-employment procedures document, self-employment policy, and training/utilization of the Business Assessment Scale. This training was follow-up with additional training in March, 2003. Future training is also being planned to promote self-employment.

The Division is successfully meeting this goal, however the following factors impede the potential for more success in the number of successful closures that include improved earnings, benefits and career advancement.

- ✓ The Division continues to promote supported employment services by serving a very high percent of individuals with the most significant disabilities. This group of consumers typically has lower wages leading to decreased average earnings.
- ✓ The Division continues to experience an increase in serving individuals with significant disabilities. Many of these individuals cannot work full time and in many situations, their hours of employment are very limited. The Division has not implemented restrictions on serving this group of individuals. On occasion, 5 hours per week of employment is a significant rehabilitation for some individuals. The limited hours of employment for these individuals does decrease the annual wage rate for the Division.
- ✓ Many consumers are choosing to limit their hours of employment and obtain employment at a lower wage to avoid losing their Social Security Benefits. In addition, many individuals do not trust the Social Security Administration. DRS has been providing benefits training across the state for providers and consumers.
- ✓ The number of private providers has increased slowly during the past three years. In many communities, there are a limited number of consumers who could benefit from a private provider. In addition, other Community Rehabilitation Programs have expanded and improved their service delivery system to better fill in the void.

## **Goal 2: Create a partnership between the Division and the local business community.**

The Division and the Freedom to Work Project are working closely with an employer group in the Aberdeen area called ERN. This group works with the local providers in promoting the hiring of consumers seeking employment and employer education.

The Division has worked closely with the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities to establish a Business Leadership Network (BLN) in South Dakota. The Division has sent staff to various national BLN seminars and has established the Sioux Falls Business Leadership Network in January 2002. Since its initiation, the Sioux Falls BLN has established a steering committee with key employers in the Sioux Falls area. The BLN has been successful in hosting a Kick-Off event for employers, Employer recognition, Employer training, Career Fairs for consumers, Mentoring events, and employer breakfasts/luncheons.

All the District Offices continue to be active members in the Chamber of Commerce in their local community. Their involvement has formed partnerships with the employers in their communities and increased the potential for employment of the Division's consumers. In addition, the District Office staff are participating in business activities in their communities. Examples of their involvement and participating:

- ✓ Economic Development Councils

- ✓ Local Workforce Development Committees
- ✓ Chamber's Transportation Committees
- ✓ Chamber's Monthly Mixers
- ✓ Employer Recognition Luncheons
- ✓ Adult Education Advisory Boards
- ✓ School to Career Task Force Committee's
- ✓ Job Fairs
- ✓ Business Education Interaction Day
- ✓ Employer Forums
- ✓ Employer Recognition Luncheons
- ✓ Employer Awards
- ✓ Business and Professional Women's Organization
- ✓ ADA training to Human Resource Managers
- ✓ Workshop for the Aberdeen Human Resource Association entitled "Job Solutions for Employers of Individuals with Chronic and Changing Disabilities".

**Goal 3: Provide specialized services to individuals with severe mental illness, traumatic brain injuries and severe multiple disabilities so they can fully access the benefits of vocational rehabilitation services.**

Providing services to individuals with severe mental illness and traumatic brain injuries continues to be major training topic in DRS. Presentations were held on these topics during the Mid Winter and Fall Conferences.

A Spinal Cord / Traumatic Brain Injury Research Fund was established in 2004 by the State of South Dakota, Governor Michael Rounds. The DRS Director is a member of this council. The purpose of the fund, which is administered by the South Dakota Spinal Cord / Traumatic Brain Injury Research Council is to:

- promote research to develop better understanding of causes and effective treatment strategies for paralysis, sensory loss, and other consequences of spinal cord/traumatic brain injury and disease
- advance knowledge of spinal cord/traumatic injury, repair, and regeneration
- foster collaborative interdisciplinary approaches
- nurture spinal cord/traumatic injury researchers through support of young scientists

The Division has made significant progress in developing methods to better serve individuals with severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI). Individuals with mental illness are currently the largest disability group served within the Division. All of our District Offices have a counselor who specializes in services for these individuals. In addition, performance contracts have been established with 4 mental health centers: Aberdeen MH Center, Behavior Management Systems, Southeastern Mental Health Center, and Human Service Agency. These contracts have promoted the use of supported employment services, supported educational services, employment skills training and transitional employment. This model of contract has developed a team approach between the local VR office and the local Mental Health Center. Use of contractual agreements has led to better coordination of long-term supports and allows individuals to have greater and easier access to vocational rehabilitation services. A VR Counselor has been designated as the primary VR counselor with the mental health center however individuals can choose another VR counselor if the arrangement is approved by the District Supervisor.

The Assistant Director for the Division has been appointed to the South Dakota Mental Health Advisory Council. This council provides input and advice to the South Dakota Division of Mental Health. The Division has approached other Mental Health Centers to implement the outcome contract and expand their vocational program.

The Division has implemented a paid work experience program with the mental health centers who have performance based contracts, and the Department of Human Services IMPACT Program in Yankton. This program provides individuals the opportunity to try community employment in a variety of occupations. This has been successful in assisting individuals to permanent employment. The Division has also restructured the Yankton Rehabilitation Program to redirect resources to be more community based. Extensive training has been provided to the staff at the IMPACT program.

During FFY 2001, the vocational program at Behavior Management Systems funded through the DRS won a national award from the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. This program was one of 24 programs cited nationally for their exemplary practices in employment for people with psychiatric disabilities. There were over 500 nominations for this award

The Division has participated on a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) workgroup to provide guidance and future development of a TBI delivery system in South Dakota. The Division continues funding a TBI program in the Rapid City area. This program does serve VR consumers statewide. The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation has also had a TBI presentation from the Brain Injury Association at the December, 2001 meeting.

A pilot TBI Project has been developed through the joint efforts of the Brookings District Rehabilitation Office and Employment Solutions, a job shop in Madison. The staff of Employment Solutions has been involved in specialized TBI training to serve this specific VR population. During this first year of operation, we have served 18 individuals. This collaborative effort has resulted in 4 consumers obtaining competitive employment in the Madison community and 3 of these individuals have already worked over 6 months. The specialized services have included evaluations, specialized TBI training, family education, and the traditional VR services of job development, placement, vocational training, and independent living training.

The Division continues to have a very high percentage of individuals with the most significant disabilities who utilize supported employment services. The success of this program is due to the coordination of supported employment services with local providers and allowing for incentive payments for outcome based services. Restructuring the funding and delivery of situational assessments has also improved services for individuals with disabilities. Insurance is now available for the consumer while completing a situational assessment. This arrangement assists in easing employer's concerns in regard to liability during the assessments conducted at job sites.

The Division historically and continues to provide training for VR Counselors and providers to improve services for individuals with disabilities under this goal. The topic of the 1999 Mid Winter training conference addressed better serving individuals with disabilities who had drug and alcohol addictions. This conference has promoted the working relationship between the local VR District Offices and drug and alcohol treatment programs. The topic for the 2001 Mid Winter conference was focusing on providing support services for individuals with significant disabilities. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, 121 Projects and VR Services providers were the audience attending this conference. In 2004, a workgroup comprised of VR counselors and supervisors developed the CD Procedures Document,

which was approved by the Division of Drugs & Alcohol. This document was reviewed with VR staff during the 2004 Mid Winter Conference. This procedures document has been incorporated into the Program Guides in order to offer guidance and consistency to the counselors who are providing services to individuals with CD diagnosis. In Mid Winter 2006, training was held regarding Methamphetamine addicts in South Dakota, their long term effects, and how VR counselors can assist them in returning to the world of work.

**Goal 4: Implement strategies that will assist consumers to make informed choices and decisions about their vocational future.**

Initiatives have been implemented to prepare and guide students with disabilities who chose to attend post-secondary education programs. The Division has participated in funding programs such as “Navigating the Future” and, “Youth Leadership Forum”. These programs offer information, resources and support to assist consumers in making good decisions about their vocational futures.

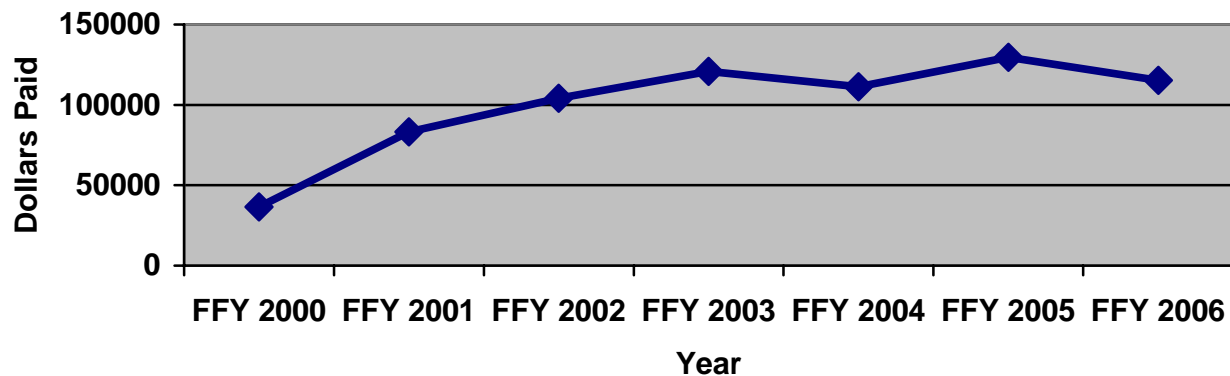
The Division has developed materials to be distributed to consumers for supported employment services; transition services, mediation guide and consumer certified providers. These materials assist the consumer and their family members to have a better understanding of supported employment services, transition services and what they can expect from providers. During FFY 1999, the Division implemented a policy on the Individual’s Plan for Employment (IPE) that includes informed choice in the development of the IPE. A letter is sent to each consumer made eligible to inform them of their options and choices in developing their IPE. Another policy was implemented addressing informed choice in assistive technology services.

The Division began funding the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) in 2001. This project has provided considerable training and resources to consumers in making informed choices and decisions. Continuous training has been provided to consumers on work incentives to demonstrate to Social Security recipients how they can utilize these incentives and still become employed. In addition, the MIG project and the Division worked with the Virginia Commonwealth University in customizing the Work World software that is a decision support software for Social Security Administration recipients who want to return to work or increase their level of employment.

During FFY 99, the Division promoted the development of a constituent workgroup consisting of members from the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Board of Service to the Blind and the Statewide Independent Living Council. This work group provided significant feedback and recommendations to the Department and Division.

The Division has been proactive in providing situational assessments for consumers to provide them an informed choice in their employment option. The Division has revised the fee schedule and policy to promote the utilization of this service. In addition, the Division has provided insurance coverage for individuals participating in situational assessments. The table below displays the increased utilization of this service.

## Utilization of Situational Assessments



The Division has made available on our home page information on our program, policy changes and the state plan. Consumers and agencies are accessing resources on the internet on a regular basis. The Division has also developed a work group to review and revise the information provided to applicants during the application process. The recommendations and changes were shared with the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation's Consumer Services work group in March of 2001. This work group has developed an application packet and a policy entitled "Informed Choice". This policy also included implementing informed choice with providers and VR Counselors when possible. These procedures were implemented during FFY 2002.

Starting in November of 2002, most individuals between the ages of 18-64 who were recipients of SSA received a Ticket from the Social Security Administration. The Division did extensive training to providers and consumers in South Dakota to help prepare individuals when they receive the Ticket. In cooperation with the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Division created a Ticket Booklet and mailed this booklet to current Division consumers and made it available to other agencies.

### **Goal 5: The Division will meet the Standards and Performances Indicators established by the Rehabilitation Services Administration.**

The final regulations on standards and performance indicators for two of the standards have been finalized during FFY 2000. The Division has met the minimum standards for past five years as shown later in this attachment. The Division's outcomes are posted on the Division's home page and distributed to the VR Board. The Division monitors the status of the performance outcomes throughout the year and works with the District Offices to assure compliance in meeting the required outcomes.

Final regulations for the remaining standards have not been developed by the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Until the regulations are finalized, the Division is using the proposed program evaluation standards. The Division in conjunction with the Consumer Services committee of the VR Board has developed a new consumer satisfaction survey. This survey utilizes the categories in the proposed regulations and began in FFY 2001.

During FFY 2004, the Rehabilitation Services Administration requested State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies to submit summary results for the potential new standard and evaluations. Evaluation Standard

3 will measure the acquisition and retention of employment with increased earnings. The Division worked closely with the Department of Labor to access the Unemployment Insurance records for cases closed during FFY 2001 who received services. The Division submitted the summary results for RSA's request by the December 31, 2003 due date.

**Goal 6: The Division will continue to review its procedures and policies and will develop methods to improve efficiencies in the delivery of services to consumers.**

The Division has quarterly supervisor meetings where topics are discussed and reviewed to develop methods to improve efficiencies in the delivery of services to consumers. Past changes include streamlining the need as to when a new Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) needed to be created or use the existing IPE. In addition to the discussions from the Supervisor's meetings, if there are inefficiencies identified by other agencies or individuals, these are reviewed and appropriate action taken.

The most significant streamlining initiative was when the Division successfully implemented a new case management system (VR FACES) during FFY 2000. This system allows counselors to access the case information from locations other than their office. Many past processes were a result of the limitations and restrictions of the previous case management system. During FFY 2003, the Division implemented new changes in the VR FACES to process the transmission of payments electronically. Part of this implementation also included incorporating the HIPPA requirements. The VR FACES also now incorporates the electronic counselor manual.

Currently in South Dakota, there are 14 Career Centers as defined in the Workforce Investment Act. The Division has staff representatives on the local councils of all 14 career centers. The Division works closely with the Career Centers to coordinate services between agencies and improve efficiencies for individuals with disabilities.

The Division has been working closely with the Benefits Specialist project funded through the Social Security Administration. The Division has expanded this project funding a second Benefits Specialist in our Sioux Falls Office and has now trained and is utilizing additional Benefits Services in the other four District Offices. This pilot project focuses on providing consumers of DRS who are also recipients of SSA benefits analysis, counseling and management during their rehabilitation program and entering into employment.

**Goal 7: The Division will revise and implement changes to the Financial Needs policy in order to provide the full range of vocational rehabilitation services to all individuals with disabilities who apply and are found eligible for services.**

The Division has reviewed the financial needs policy and effective 10/1/1999 implemented a new policy requiring a financial needs test prior to the delivery of post-secondary service. Prior to implementation of this policy, considerable input was provided at public meetings and by the VR Board. Based upon input from the VR Board and the public meetings, the Division honored VR plans currently in place where post secondary training was already included as a planned service up to 10/1/1999. Training on the changes to the Financial Needs has been provided to staff on two occasions and continued training is being planned. The Financial Needs policy changes have been incorporated into the Division's case management system to assure the information is being calculated correctly. The Division has developed common samples of post-secondary scenarios and how they are to be funded. This was addressed at new counselor training and can be found in the Counselor Manual.

Each Division District Supervisor meets regularly with post-secondary staff in their region to review and provide training on the changes in the financial needs policy. The District Supervisors continue to have regular contact with the post secondary program on financial needs and providing accommodations for Division's consumers. This goal has been completed with the Division now providing on-going training and technical assistance to VR Counselors.

The Division has also implemented changes to policy on scholarship definition for being exempt in consideration as a comparable benefit and implemented the regulation change in 2001 where individuals who are on Social Security Benefits due to their disability are exempt from a financial needs test.

**Goal 8: The Division will implement strategies to expand services to individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities.**

In October of 1998 the Division implemented a new policy on Situational Assessments and Trial Work Experiences. This policy provided guidelines on conducting situational assessments/trial work experiences and offered insurance coverage while individuals were at an evaluation site. As a result of this policy change, the Division purchased 4.5 times more situational assessments between FFY 1998-2000. Many of the situational assessments/trial work experiences lead to permanent employment. The Division continues to review the fee schedule for supported employment services and promote incentives for providing services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. The Division is working with Communication Services for the Deaf to identify and provide specialized employment support services needed for individuals who are deaf and/or have limited communication skills. The Mid Winter conference in March 2001 did focus on support services on and off of the job for individuals with significant disabilities.

The Division restructured staff duties in the Yankton Rehabilitation Program to redirect staff positions to provide community based employment for consumers of this program and the Yankton IMPACT program. Intensive training was provided during FFY 02 for personnel in the Yankton Rehabilitation Program, IMPACT, and Human Services Center.

The Division has also implemented a paid work experience program for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. This initiative has been expanded to other mental health centers around the state. A policy, assessment tool and fee schedule was established during FFY 2003 to help improve the supports and independent living needs that impact employment. Training was provided state wide on the DDN.

**Goal 9: The Division will implement strategies to provide vocational rehabilitation services to Native Americans and other individuals of minority backgrounds with disabilities.**

The Division has updated the cooperative agreements with each of the 121 Native American Projects. Each District Office has a liaison who works specifically with the 121 Projects. In the past, South Dakota has had four 121 Native American Programs. One of them did not get refunded for FFY 2006. Staff from the 121 Projects have been invited to all Division training conferences. In addition, the Division is working with other Native American Nations without 121 Projects. The Division continues to have participate in the Native American Summits and the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) Conferences.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services have a representative who participates in the planning of the annual statewide Native American Summit. The Division has had staff representation at the annual



Native American Summits. The Division will continue to have staff attend the Native American Summits to encourage better collaboration and communication.

One of the Division's VR counselors attended the 2001 National Conference on Native American Rehabilitation in Seattle, Washington on December 10, 11 and 12, 2001. The theme for this conference was "Building the Future Through Leadership and Partnership." This is an annual conference that is open to Tribal 121 VR projects, State VR Agencies and other interested parties. It was sponsored by the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation, Western Washington University/Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation and Region X RSA. Co-sponsors were the American Indian Rehabilitation Research & Training Center - Northern Arizona University; Region VIII Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program - University of Northern Colorado and the Seattle Center.

**Goal 10: The Division will implement strategies so applicants/consumers will have more information on Vocational Rehabilitation and have greater access to their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.**

The ruralness of South Dakota and large caseloads have always been major barriers for consumers to having consistent access to their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Counselors purchase vocational services from community rehabilitation programs to assist with allowing counselors more time to provide vocational guidance and counseling for consumers. The Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired continue to evaluate inefficiencies between the two divisions to find ways to increase the number of counselors and decrease caseload sizes.

The Division has assisted the Department of Labor in establishing accessible computer workstations where individuals with disabilities can access job information at the career centers or the Division's home page. The Division has been experiencing an increase in use of consumers communicating with their VR Counselors via e-mail. The Division continues to keep information about the Division available on the Division's home page. This includes revised policies, success stories, notice of public meetings, notice of federal changes and other relevant information.

The Division has established sub offices in Spearfish, Huron, Pierre, Chamberlain, and Watertown to provide greater access for our consumers. During FFY 2003, the Division established new one person offices in Mitchell and Mobridge.

**Goal 11: Based upon recommendations provided as public input, the Division will place a priority on Transition Services and eliminate the inconsistencies in service delivery statewide as well as develop more timely service capacities.**

The Division has worked closely with the Office of Special Education and has developed a way of continuing the initiatives that were previously provided through the federal transition state-wide systems change grant. The Division and the Office of Special Education's proposal, the Transition Services Liaison Project was approved during SFY 2000 by the Secretary of Department of Human Services and the Secretary of the Department of Education. The Division and the Office of Special Education have designated personnel to provide support at both the state (central) level and the local level. This has been done through the continuation of four positions; a coordinator person to work directly with state level personnel and who will oversee the activities of three field based individuals who provide ongoing technical assistance to local level agencies and schools. Key activities of the Transition Services Liaison Project include the following:

- Staff support for the Youth Leadership Forum;

- Assist with monitoring of the Project Skills Program;
- Draft transition policy;
- Participate in ongoing staff meetings of DRS, and OSE;
- Arrange and provide transition training and services throughout the state;
- Provide transition training for new VR Counselors;
- Provide quarterly regional transition forums across the state to ensure collaboration among agencies and provide information relating to transition areas;
- Develop and distribute best practices for educators and VR counselors;
- Participate in the Transition Outcomes Project to identify specific problems in implementing the transition services requirements;
- Coordinate the Youth Leadership Forum promotion/follow up on personal leadership plans;
- Create linkages and consult with post secondary special needs coordinators, tech prep coordinators, admission counselors, special education teachers, VR counselors and guidance counselors in accessing post secondary institutes, services and accommodations that are available to students with disabilities, CATCH THE WAVE activities and assistive technology.

The Assistant Directors for the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Office of Special Education are the main points of contact for both agencies when dealing with Transition Services. These individuals meet monthly to review the coordination of services between the two agencies and provide management direction for the Transition Services Liaison Project. Through the Transition Services Liaison Project, the Division will be participating in a pilot project of conducting a comprehensive review of their schools and then monitor their progress in transition services.

The South Dakota Transition Outcomes Project funded through the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Office of Special Education focuses on measurable results that are consistent with IDEA transition requirements that improves the post school outcomes for students with disabilities. The first round of schools were reviewed in the Spring of 2001. The IEPs of transition age students were reviewed to determine any problems or deficit areas with the transition requirements of IDEA '97. The project identified, with local district staff, strategies, interventions and an implementation plan with specific measurable targets that will directly address the problem or deficit areas. In the Fall of 2001, the project provided follow along with building staff to assist in implementing the strategies/interventions and implementation plan, the evaluations took place during the spring of 2002 and reported on the changes, improvements, activities, and strategies. Also in the summer of 2002, the second phase was implemented to work with nine more schools in South Dakota, which is three per region.

During FFY 2005, the Division of Rehabilitation Services presented in Washington, DC at the National RSA Transition Conference. DRS had two presentations: "Project Skills" and "The Transition Services Liaison Project". The Division had numerous contacts from other states on transition services in South Dakota. Also during FFY 2005, the Division presented on a Region VIII video teleconference about rural transition services.

**Goal 12: The Division will obtain recommendations from the VR Board, consumer work groups, and through public input as to methods to improve consumer services, reduce duplication, increase efficiencies and improve case service expenditures between the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired.**

The Division implemented a work group of employees to develop recommendations to improve consumer services, and coordination between the two Divisions. At the beginning of the FFY 2000, the Division established a constituent work group to review the employee's recommendations, identify methods to

improve consumer services, reduce duplication, increase efficiencies and improve case service expenditures between the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired.

The constituent work group involving representation of the three boards review the recommendations of the employee workgroup. In addition, the Constituent workgroup has developed a series of recommendations for the Department of Human Services as to when both Divisions can coordinate activities more effectively. The work group made recommendations in regards to improve customer services, supervisory structure, and better coordination of services between the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. The Division has made significant accomplishments with the constituent work group's recommendations. To improve customer service, the Division implemented a clerical pool concept, common receptionist areas, and added an additional satellite office in Chamberlain. To improve the supervisory structure, the Division changed the organizational chart to have interpreters and all support staff in the district offices supervised directly by the District Supervisor. The Division has also moved forward in improving areas of better coordination of services between the two divisions and improving specialized services at the Yankton Rehabilitation Program.

The State-wide Independent Living Council, and the Boards of the Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Rehabilitation Services have been meeting jointly to assist with coordination of services and implementing improved vocational rehabilitation service delivery for all individuals with disabilities in South Dakota. The first joint meeting of these three Rehabilitation Act Advisory Councils was accomplished in March of 2001. The activities of this workgroup have been completed and on-going input is provided directly from the Board members to the Division.

The Division actively consults with the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation by providing copies of draft policies to the consumer services committee and to the full Board. The Board of VR is provided an opportunity to provide input and recommendations on draft policies 30 days before implementation.

### **Federal Program Evaluation Standards**

In accordance with the provisions of the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education has proposed the following evaluation standards (see Federal Register Vol.63, No. 198 issued on October 14, 1998 on Proposed Rules, pages 55292- 55305). The proposed standards 1 and 4 are based on section 106 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P. L. 105-220 of August 7, 1998), which contains the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act. The proposed standards 2, 3, and 5 are not based on the Workforce Investment Act, but the Secretary believes that they are important factors in successful rehabilitation programs. Standards 1 and 2 have been finalized as published in the Federal Register Vol.65, No. 108 issued on June 5, 2000, pages 35792 - 35801. The remaining standards have not yet been finalized.

### **Standard 1: Employment Outcomes**

Standard 1 is based on section 106 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P. L. 105-220 of August 7, 1998), which contains the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act. This standard requires an agency to assist eligible individuals with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, to obtain, maintain, or regain high quality employment outcomes. The quality of an employment outcome is based on whether the outcome is consistent with the individual's vocational choices; is in competitive, self-employment, or BEP employment; maintains or increases the individual's earnings; and allows

medical insurance plans covering hospitalization. The following six performance indicators measure minimum compliance with this standard.

- 1.1. Compare the total numbers of individuals obtaining an employment outcome during the current and previous performance periods.
- 1.2. Measure the number of persons obtaining an employment outcome as a percentage of all persons exiting the program after receiving VR services.
- 1.3. Measure the number of persons obtaining a competitive, self-employment, or BEP employment outcome as a percentage of all persons obtaining any type of employment outcome. **Primary Indicator**
- 1.4. Measure the percentage of competitively employed individuals who have significant disabilities. **Primary Indicator**
- 1.5. Measure the average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-employment, or BEP employment with earnings levels equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to the State's average hourly earnings for all individuals in the State who are employed. **Primary Indicator**
- 1.6. Measure the difference between the percentage of individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-employment, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage who report their own income as their largest single source of economic support and the percentage of individuals in that employment who reported their own income as their largest single source of support at the time they applied for VR services.

## **Standard 2: Equal Access to Services**

Standard 2 requires compliance with one performance indicator which measures equality of access to rehabilitation services.

- 2.1. Measure whether individuals from minority backgrounds have been provided services at the same rate as non-minority individuals.

## **Assessment of the State VR Agency in meeting the Performance Standards and Indicators**

The Division of Rehabilitation Services has been monitoring the development of the performance standards and indicators. Utilizing the FFY 2006 data, the Division's performance was evaluated in meeting the minimum requirements for Standards 1 and 2. The following chart displays the outcome of this assessment.

<b>Standard/Indicator</b>	<b>Minimum Requirement</b>	<b>Division's Outcome</b>	<b>Indicator Met</b>
Standard 1: Employment Outcomes	4 of the 6 Indicators and 2 of the 3 Primary	6 of the 6 Indicators and all 3 Primary	

	Indicators	Indicators	
Indicator 1.1	830	859	Yes
Indicator 1.2	55.8%	59.28%	Yes
Indicator 1.3	72.6%	100%	Yes
Indicator 1.4	62.4%	95.57%	Yes
Indicator 1.5	\$7.52	\$7.79	Yes
Indicator 1.6	53%	58.61%	Yes
Standard 2: Equal Access to Services	The Indicator must be met	The Indicator was met	
Indicator 2.1	80%	82.51%	Yes

### **Past Utilization of Innovation and Expansion Funds - DRS**

Section 101 (a)(18) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as Amended requires the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency to reserve and use a portion of the funds for:

(i) The development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment and goals and priorities of the State; and

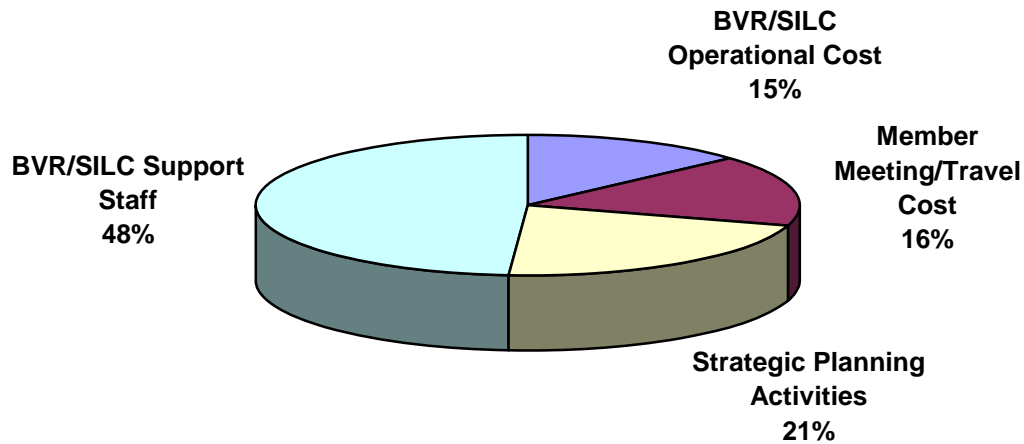
(ii) To support the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council.

Prior to the 1998 Amendments of the Rehabilitation Act, the Division of Rehabilitation Services was required to utilize 1.5% of the Federal 110 funds for Innovation and Expansion (I&E) activities. The Division continues to use these funds at an increased percentage. During the 2005 State Fiscal year, \$93,209 was obligated for I&E activities through a contract with the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities. The contract provides for the following:

- ✓ Support staff for the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Statewide Independent Living Council contracted through the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities. This includes wages and benefits for .9 FTE Board support staff.
- ✓ Operational costs, equipment, travel for support staff and office supplies paid through the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities.
- ✓ Costs involved in having members of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation or the Statewide Independent Living Council attend meetings/training.
- ✓ Strategic Planning Initiatives approved by the Board of VR to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment and goals and priorities of the State.

The following graph displays the distribution of these funds:

## SFY2006 I&E Budget



Expenditures for the Strategic Planning Activities for SFY 2006 consist of the following:

- ✓ \$378 – Public Meetings
- ✓ \$9,670 – National Disability Employment Awareness Month Activities
- ✓ \$960 - Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
- ✓ \$1,500 - NA Leadership Conference